



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 532

January Session, 2013

Substitute Senate Bill No. 27

Senate, April 17, 2013

The Committee on Human Services reported through SEN. SLOSSBERG of the 14th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT PROMOTING THE PURSUIT OF EDUCATION BY RECIPIENTS OF ASSISTANCE.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commissioner of
2 Social Services and the Labor Commissioner shall permit a recipient of
3 temporary family assistance to attend approved educational courses,
4 as described in subsection (b) of this section, to meet the requirements
5 of the recipient's employability plan, established pursuant to section
6 17b-689c of the general statutes, provided the state complies with
7 federal work participation requirements for the employment services
8 program established pursuant to section 17b-688c of the general
9 statutes.

10 (b) To the extent permissible under federal law, educational courses
11 of study which may be approved pursuant to subsection (c) of this
12 section as required employment activities for recipients of temporary
13 family assistance include, but are not limited to: (1) Two-year or four-
14 year college degree programs, and (2) high school graduate

15 equivalency degree or basic education programs for recipients
 16 otherwise ineligible to enroll in such programs during their first
 17 twenty weekly hours of required employment activities.

18 (c) The Labor Commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner
 19 of Social Services, shall implement policies and procedures to establish
 20 (1) which degree programs may qualify as an approved employment
 21 activity, and (2) enrollment and academic requirements for students
 22 who are recipients of temporary family assistance. The Labor
 23 Commissioner shall implement such policies and procedures while in
 24 the process of adopting such policies and procedures in regulation
 25 form, provided the Labor Commissioner prints notice of intent to
 26 adopt the regulations in the Connecticut Law Journal not later than
 27 twenty days after implementing such policies and procedures. Policies
 28 and procedures implemented pursuant to this subsection shall be valid
 29 until the time final regulations are effective.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
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Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In section 1(a), "defined" was changed to "described" for accuracy; in section 1(b), "pursuant to subsection (c) of this section" was added after "approved" for clarity and in section 1(c) "them" was changed to "such policies and procedures" for clarity.

HS *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact as the Departments of Social Services and Labor currently allow program participants to attend certain educational programs, provided the state is able to meet the federal work participation rate requirement.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**sSB 27*****AN ACT PROMOTING THE PURSUIT OF EDUCATION BY RECIPIENTS OF ASSISTANCE.*****SUMMARY:**

To the extent permitted by federal law, this bill requires the commissioners of social services (DSS) and labor (DOL) to (1) permit recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) to attend approved educational courses of study to meet their Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) employability plan requirements and (2) have such coursework count towards the first 20 hours of required employment-related activities (see BACKGROUND). Such courses of study can include two- or four-year college degree programs, high school equivalent programs, and basic education. The agencies must continue to ensure that the state meets the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work participation rate requirement.

Under current law, the JFES program must permit and encourage parents receiving TFA to pursue education and training, including two- and four-year college degree programs, only when the state's unemployment rate reaches 8% or more and stays there for at least three months. In practice, DOL has permitted a limited number of TFA recipients to engage in high school-equivalent programs and basic education if they are embedded in a vocational rehabilitation activity. It generally prohibits individuals from pursuing a college degree unless such pursuit is in addition to, and not in lieu of, an allowable employment-related activity.

The bill requires the DOL commissioner, in consultation with the DSS commissioner, to implement policies and procedures to establish (1) which degree programs qualify and (2) enrollment and academic requirements for such students. It permits the DOL commissioner to

implement policies and procedures while in the process of adopting them in regulation, provided he prints notice of intent to adopt the regulations in the *Connecticut Law Journal* within 20 days of implementation. The policies and procedures are valid until final regulations go into effect.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Jobs First and the Federal Work Participation Rate

The state's Jobs First program includes two parts—(1) TFA, which generally provides up to 21 months of cash assistance to needy families with children, and (2) JFES, which provides services and supports to adult caretakers to help them secure permanent employment within the time limit.

The federal TANF block grant funds the Jobs First program. Consequently, states that use TANF funds must follow federal rules regarding work. In general, 50% of a state's non-exempt, adult caretakers in families receiving TANF-funded cash assistance must be engaged in work-related activities for at least 30 hours a week (or 35 if a two-parent household). This is commonly referred to as the work participation rate.

Although the federal law requires the state to meet a 50% requirement, the state's effective rate is significantly lower because the TANF law also allows states to receive credit for reducing their cash assistance caseloads. Hence, in FFY 13, Connecticut has an effective work participation rate of 21.4%.

Employability Plans and Allowable Work Activities

State law requires DOL, in conjunction with the adult TFA recipient, to develop an employability plan to ensure that the adult is able to find work and support his or her family by the end of the 21-month time limit. (Extensions to this limit are allowed in certain circumstances.)

Federal law prescribes the types of activities that count towards the

first 20 and the last 10 of the required 30 hours. Specifically, the law requires adults to engage in certain “core” activities during the first 20 hours. These are:

1. subsidized or unsubsidized employment;
2. paid work experience;
3. on-the-job training;
4. job search and job readiness;
5. vocational education training (up to 30% of the caseload may participate, with a 12-month maximum per participant);
6. community service; and
7. providing child care for others doing community service.

Federal law also allows states to permit teen parents who do not have their high school diplomas to attend high school or its equivalent during the first 20 hours. The JFES program allows this.

Post-Secondary Education

In general, post-secondary education is not an allowable JFES plan activity. But if a JFES participant has enrolled in post-secondary education on his or her own and is within six months of getting a degree, his or her JFES case manager must ensure that the employment plan activities do not interfere with the participant’s completion of the degree program. In these cases, the number of hours the client participates in post-secondary education activities is counted as vocational education.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 6 (04/03/2013)